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RESTING
By William Ritschel

—Courtesy Mr. C. W. Dilworth, Chicago

The Joy of Living Expressed Through Art

By EVELYN MARIE STUART

CALIFORNIA has come to be firmly established as a rival to Italy from the standpoint of artistic preferment, especially of late years since so many of our ablest painters have sought her sunshine and the blue waters of the Pacific for inspiration.

The Ritschel exhibition consisting largely of California marines made one feel that here indeed, was the land of the gods. No theme could be better suited to Ritschel's art than is the magnificent coast of California, and no artist better fitted for worthily presenting the theme. Here is a perfect land of beauty and charm unsurpassable, and an art of perfect poise, gracious in its handling of form and color. A big rugged country and a big vigorous art, a lovely country and a colorful art, equal to the task of presenting the majesty and beauty of cliff and cypress and the stress or joy of the sea.

Glancing about the room at the Art Insti-

tute wherein the Ritschel paintings were exhibited, one received a very strong impression of blue. It was the ocean, the broad Pacific, ever present, ever rolling and tossing or slipping between the rocks at the foot of great crags and boulders, always very close to us as though we sat among the stones along the shore, with the water so near that little of the sky obtruded itself upon the range of our seaward outlook. This is a not unusual characteristic of Ritschel's marines, which are very often high in the frames with only a strip of sky at the top.

This gives one the water's edge sensation, of the gurgle and wash of waves and a delicious nearness to and oneness with the rocks and the sounding sea. There is a great sense of satisfaction and enjoyment about these marines. They are not problematical or tragic, though the water often tosses majestically. It is ever the beauty and freedom of



STORM SWEPT CYPRESS, POINT LOBOS, CALIFORNIA
By William Ritschel



THE TIDE POOL
By William Ritschel

the waves that we feel with never a suggestion of their lurking dangers.

They are blue with a lapis lazuli richness of hue and shade, while the rocks gleam golden in the sun or darken to grey and brown in the shadows. White foam sparkles and spray tosses high and we relax to the charm of nature and feel the world well forgot for the idle joy of dreaming and loving beauty.

Artists are a lucky lot, though many of them do not realize it. What profession is more blessed than that of the man whose sole task is to see and record beauty? William Ritschel is one of those who realize their good fortune and their obligations to the rest of toiling and careworn humanity. He loves his work and his world, his life and his art, and he brings us a message from the very heart of nature and the sea, in pic-

tures which we need not to study but only to absorb and enjoy. He burdens us with no intricate theories, requiring long explanation and careful attention, no methods calling for elucidation or argument in their behalf. He is content to show beauty that we have not seen or perhaps could not ourselves have seen had it been before us. He lends us his artist's vision to prove that the world is a region of delight.

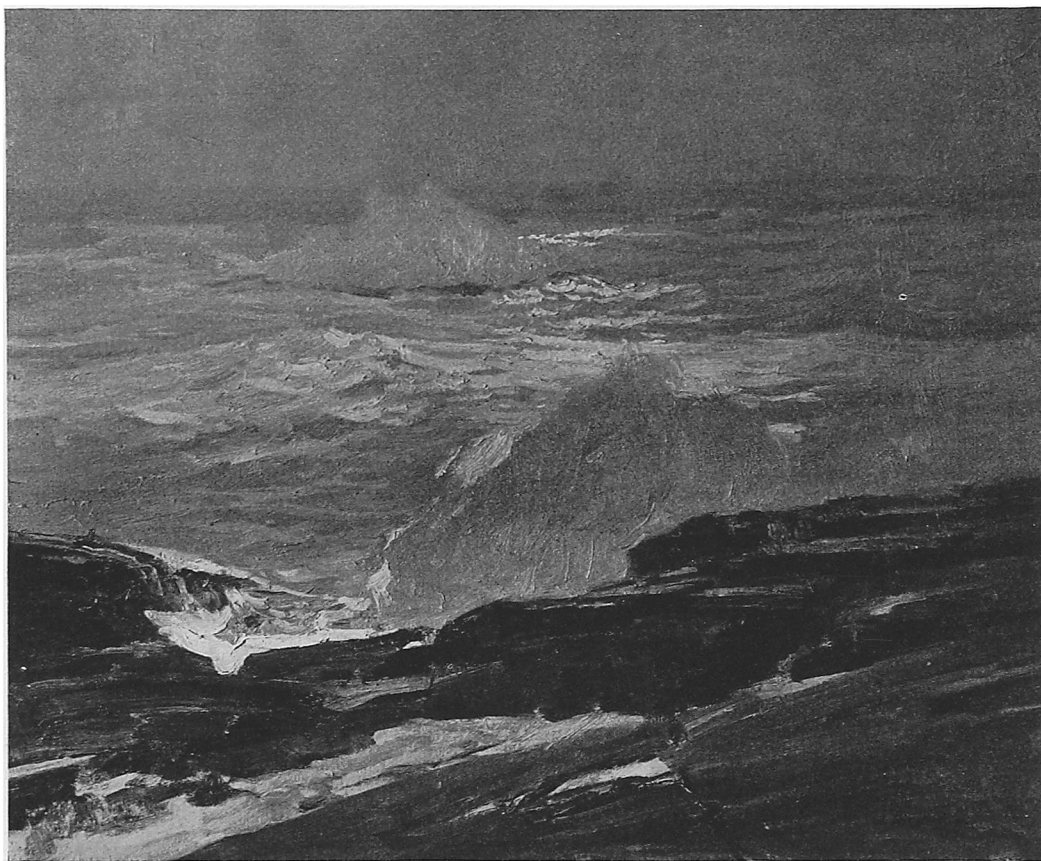
And thus we are thrilled and charmed, for even the least lettered in art could no more miss the charm of his pictures than a savage could fail to see beauty in

a superb and finely cut diamond. There are some things so full of intrinsic loveliness that the most ignorant and the most learned alike know them at one glance for great treasures.

The great popularity of the Ritschel exhibition and the enthusiasm it has aroused



PLAY OF THE WAVES, CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA By William Ritschel



MOONLIT BREAKERS, MONHEGAN ISLAND, MAINE
By William Ritschel

—Courtesy Mr. Paul Schulze, Chicago

among connoisseurs proves these pictures to be in the class of things dowered with this innate quality of beauty, universally felt and acknowledged. Some pictures make one long to get away and see the spot presented. Ritschel's take us there, allowing us to forget time and distance.

They are very sincere impressions of a most devoted lover of nature and of beauty, accomplished through a technique which is so finished that, like a perfect manner, it does not obtrude itself but seems entirely natural. This, alas, is where genius very often fails or is handicapped, for the man of great thought, great feeling or great vision stands the most in need of great skill in the manner of expression that he may make his message clear to the listening world. It is only when the mastery of a medium is so complete that its use is second nature, when it is

as accessible as his mother tongue, that an artist in any line is fitted for complete self expression.

It is inspiring to listen to this artist enthuse over the beauties of California, its sun and sea, its atmosphere and skies, its misty nights with huge cypress trunks standing out of the gloom like the ghosts of the departed race of giants. Some day he intends to paint something absolutely subjective, a nocturne, full of suggestion and mystery.

Perhaps he has approached this ambition in "Storm-swept Cypress, Point Lobos, California," for there is in this picture a feeling of solitude and power that presages the voice of the spirit. This is also the greyest and least colorful of his California themes, the silvery storm veil dimming the glories of that usually colorful clime.

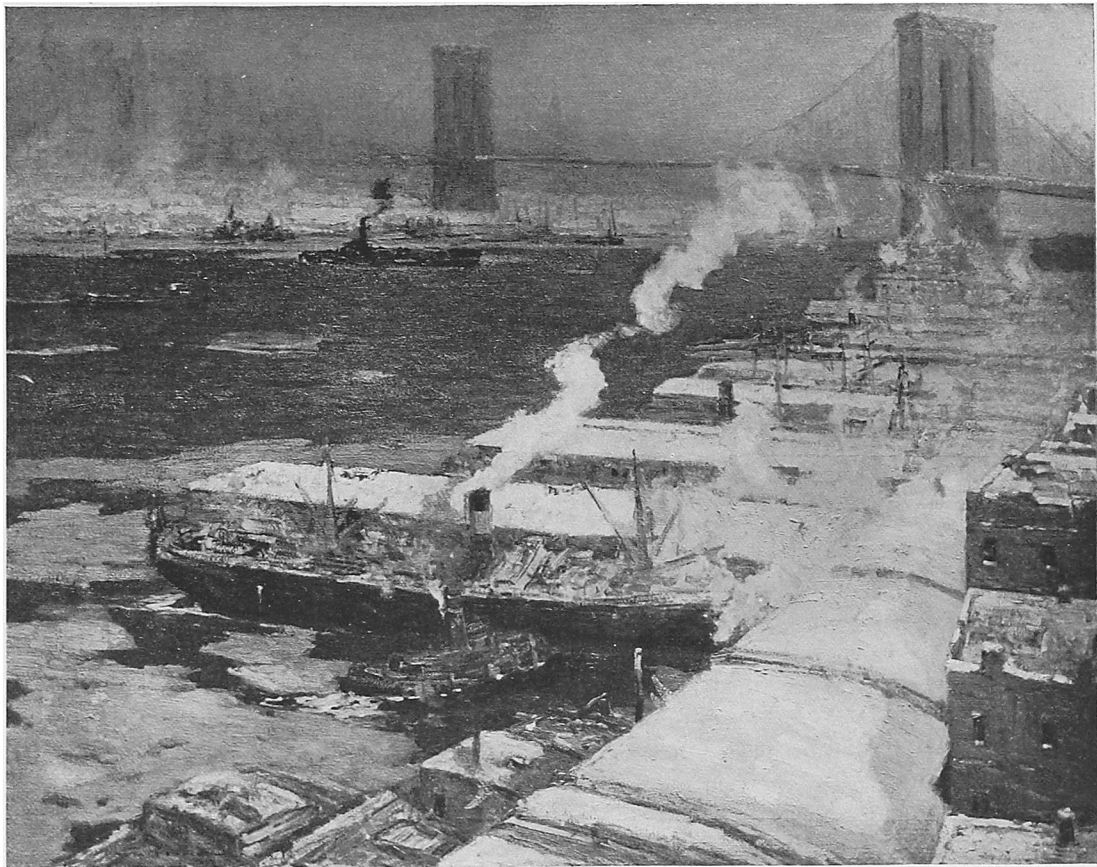
Three huge canvases. "The Tide Pool, Cali-

fornia," "Let There Be Light," and "Play of the Waves, Carmel-by-the-Sea," occupied one end of the gallery, seeming almost like a superb tryptic of ocean moods. "The Tide Pool" was beautiful with the blue of eddying waters and the golden and brown of warm-toned rocks. A something decorative lurked in the play of ocean currents among the boulders, something reminding one of murals, tapestries, and the like. Perhaps this was because so many of these lovely things have found the source of their inspiration in such aspects of nature.

"Play of the Waves" was a bit wilder, the waters sparkling in foam-crested sportiveness, instead of curling and slipping quietly amid the rocks as in the first mentioned canvas. The greatest of these, however, was "Let There Be Light," a canvas whose title was suggested by a great musician when he stood in awed rapture before it. Whether from the long training of Christian centuries or a more

remote heritage from a sun-worshipping ancestry, there was something about this picture that made one feel like kneeling. Dawn upon the waters, with a track of sparkling light over the misty waves, a track that seems indeed a path from heaven itself for the descending footsteps of deity. Nor is it strange that a painting absolutely true to natural fact should yet possess so much of the ideal and spiritual qualities, for do not the phenomena of nature herself often affect us similarly?

"The Cave of the Sea at Monterey," loaned by Mr. Paul Schulze, was perhaps the most richly colored of all these splendid sea coast scenes, blue and gold predominating in the impression which it left. A close inspection of Ritschel's canvases reveals great breadth of handling. His themes, however, are so large that we are not oppressed by his method, in fact do not even think of it at all except as curiosity invites very close examination. Then we are surprised at the many



EAST RIVER, NEW YORK

By William Ritschel

notes of mingled color among the rocks and the heavy touches of pigment that seem but the lightest and whitest flecks of foam upon the waves.

In strong contrast to the California coast studies were two eastern canvases, "Moonlit Breakers, Monhegan Island, Maine," loaned by Mr. Paul Schulze, and "East River, New York," while a lone study of Norway introduced an entirely foreign note, but yet full-toned and deep. "Moonlit Breakers" has been shown before in these columns and its character is familiar to all who have kept in touch with this artist's career. It is one of the most successful of his studies of wild grey water about this lonely island of the Maine coast and is appropriately silvery and wraith-like with the cold feeling of the Atlantic.

"East River, New York," is a bit unusual as dealing more with the things made by man than do most of Mr. Ritschel's pictures. The shipping in the harbor, the big bridge and all other hints of human activity are, however, on the stupendous scale of things that appeals most forcibly to this painter's fancy.

"Place of Silence, Lofoten, Norway," has been renamed by a prominent society woman and art connoisseur of Toledo, "The Shadow of the World," a name which captivated even the creator of the picture himself. It was painted under peculiar circumstances which may account for much of its fascination. During a sojourn in Norway Mr. Ritschel made the acquaintance of a lieutenant in the navy who was engaged in making a coast

survey. A certain lonely island off the coast fascinated the painter and the sailor obligingly had him set off on this island every night at eleven o'clock calling for him again at four in the morning. Here in silence and solitude, under the peculiar conditions of northern skies, the artist found inspiration for a truly great picture, a picture of tall crags with shadows about their bases and the strange light of an unearthly sun wanly gilding cloud and peak. The cold and quiet sea lapping upon the shore and the wheeling seabirds about the towering crags completed a scene of great solemnity and charm.

Indeed this artist found great delight in the weird aspects of nature in the far north, the curious feeling of sunset qualities in the light at eleven in the morning and again of sunrise at one. His joy in nature and all of her works is the very keynote of his character and thought processes. He believes firmly that the artist should be an optimist, seeking beauty, living beauty, giving happiness. He feels that to become interested in art is one of the greatest of all good things that can befall a man, teaching him to regard nature less in a panoramic way and see her more as a series of pictures, each worthy of study and devotion.

He has certainly been most successful in putting his sentiments into his work for his pictures are essentially delightful, making us realize that just to live and to see are in themselves great privileges, and, after all, can there be better art than that which makes us feel that the world is very beautiful and that it is good to be alive?